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GOVERNOR
SAMUEL BIGGER

Governor Samuel Bigger

SAMUEL BIGGER

FORT WAYNE'S

FORGOTTEN MAN

Prepared by the Staff of the
Public Library of Fort Wayne and Allen County
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FOREWORD

Samuel Bigger, the seventh governor of Indiana, was once loved and respected as a faithful public servant by Hoosier citizens; today he is generally unknown. "This man, who had few enemies in life, can find fewer friends in death." Governor Bigger deserves to be remembered throughout the state, and particularly in Fort Wayne, for he spent his last years and is buried in the Summit City. The Boards and the Staff of the Public Library of Fort Wayne and Allen County present this biographical sketch in the hope that Samuel Bigger, patriot and statesman, will cease to be "Fort Wayne's forgotten man."

Samuel Bigger is more closely associated with Fort Wayne than any other governor of Indiana. Governor David Wallace lived here less than a year following his term of office, but his period of residence was too brief to allow him to make a permanent impression on the community. Governor Thomas R. Marshall of nearby Columbia City is well remembered in Fort Wayne; Governor Ralph Gates, also of Columbia City, is widely known in this community. Marshall, later Vice-President of the United States under Woodrow Wilson, practiced law in Allen County and was prominent in Masonic activities. Gates, also an attorney, has many close political and personal ties with Fort Wayne. Bigger, however, lived in Fort Wayne longer than any other governor, and he is the only governor interred in the Summit City.

The early governors of Indiana were not native sons of the state. Of the first six governors, three were Easterners and three were Southerners; Bigger was the first Midwesterner. He was born in Warren County, Ohio, on March 20, 1802, one year before Ohio was admitted to the Union. His father, Colonel John Bigger, a Pennsylvanian who had fought in the American Revolution, was a man of strong character. He served for twenty years in the Ohio legislature and became a distinguished Whig. Political prominence brought closer association with the foremost Whig leaders. The Colonel's eldest son, Samuel, first met such men as Henry Clay and Thomas Corwin as distinguished guests in his father's home.

In childhood, however, Samuel evidenced few qualities marking him for the political arena. He was frail, sensitive, and retiring. Finley Bigger recalled that brother Samuel as a boy "was noted for expertness in wearing out the seat and knees of his breeches; a good pair would last him about a week." Even a pair of buckskin pants "didn't stand his gyrations long." As Samuel grew older, he became increas-

ingly fond of books. Colonel Bigger decided that the boy's frail health unfitted him for manual labor but that his scholarly inclinations suited him for a profession.

After intensive preparation at home, Samuel Bigger entered the University of Ohio at Athens; he was graduated with honors. He studied law and for a short time practiced in Lebanon, Ohio. In 1829, however, he came to Indiana and settled at Liberty in Union County, where, on May 25, 1830, he married Miss Ellen Williamson. Soon he moved to Rushville, opened a law office with O. H. Smith, and began his public career.

During the period of Bigger's early residence in Indiana, Jacksonian Democracy reached the crest of its popularity. The prospects of the Whig party were dim, but Bigger was loyal to the political faith of his father. After 1832, the appeal of "Old Hickory" and the power of the Democratic party were still strong; the Whigs, nevertheless, were beginning to gain strength.

When Bigger was elected to the Indiana legislature in 1834, power was almost equally divided between the Whigs and the Democrats. Although Bigger was just beginning his first term, he was the Whig candidate for speaker of the house. Nomination for speaker would have been an honor for any member, and it was an especial honor for a new representative. At that time the legislature was far more powerful than it is today, and the power of the speaker rivaled that of the governor. On the first ballot Bigger received thirty-seven votes and his opponent thirty-eight. One vote was split. On four ballots each candidate received thirty-eight votes, but on the sixth ballot Bigger lost one vote and was defeated. His influence, nevertheless, must have been considerable throughout the session.

Under the leadership of Governor Noah Noble, the state program of internal

improvements was already well advanced. Noble urged the legislature to organize a board of public works which would develop an over-all plan of state improvements. He pointed out that "no work should be commenced but such as would be of acknowledged public utility, and when completed would form a branch of some general system." Noble also asked the legislature to give special consideration to the construction of the railroad between Lawrenceberg and Indianapolis.

During Bigger's first term as representative, the legislature was greatly disturbed by Michigan's contention that its southern boundary should extend to an east and west line through the southern extreme of Lake Michigan. Indiana would have been deprived of a strip of land ten miles wide across the northern part of the state, and access to Lake Michigan would have been lost. The entrance to its greatest public improvement, the Wabash and Erie Canal, would have been in another state. The Indiana legislature of 1834 vigorously protested, and in 1836 Congress disallowed the Michigan claim.

In addition to concentrating on internal improvements and the boundary question, the legislature chartered the State Bank of Indiana. Bigger opposed the Bank and voted against its charter; later as governor, he opposed it in theory but believed it a necessary evil. At the end of his first legislative session, the General Assembly vacated the old capitol at Corydon.

Bigger was re-elected in 1835 and was therefore a member of the first legislature to convene in the "New State Capitol" in Indianapolis. Nearly the entire session was devoted to problems related to internal improvements. Bigger doubtlessly shared the optimism of his colleagues and was pleased with Governor Noble's announcement that the "middle division" of the Wabash and Erie Canal was in opera-

tion.

Rush County, conservative then as now, was safely Whig and in all probability would have continued to re-elect Bigger indefinitely. Under the state constitution of 1816, many administrative powers were exercised by the legislature instead of by the governor. The legislature, for example, elected judges to fill vacancies in the various circuit courts of the state. During Bigger's second term, the legislature elected him judge of the Circuit Court of Rush County. At the next regular election, the choice of the legislature was approved by the electorate, for Bigger was duly elected "President of the Eastern Circuit Court" for a seven-year term.

Bigger's original selection by his legislative colleagues and his election by his home district indicate the esteem in which he was held. Although he had served less than two terms when he resigned from the legislature to accept the judgeship, the INDIANA JOURNAL expressed regret at his resignation:

"We are very sorry to learn that Samuel Bigger, Esq., late a representative of Rush County in the popular branch of the General Assembly, has published his determination to retire for a time from public life. With respectable talents, liberal and enlightened views, urbanity, and tact, he is calculated to be, as he has in fact been, an efficient and useful legislator. At this interesting period of our history--the most important perhaps since the commencement of our state government--such legislators as Mr. Bigger are much needed."

Jacob Julian, who knew the future governor in Rush County and later attained legal prominence in Indianapolis, wrote an excellent personal description of Bigger. These reminiscences first appeared in the RICHMOND PALLADIUM and were reprinted in the INDIANA MAGAZINE OF HISTORY in June, 1908:

"Bigger was a tall, rather fine-looking young man. He was fond of fun, and spent most of his time playing the violin in Noble's saloon and in joking with its inmates. He was a good-humored, pleasant fellow, apparently without energy or ambition, and was liked because of his social qualities. While, however, this was the public estimate of him, his intimate friends had confidence in his ability and ultimate success. When Judge Charles H. Test left the bench, this jolly good fellow, this fiddler of the saloon, was made his successor. People soon found that he was making an excellent judge. He did not prove an able lawyer, but with his good, strong sense, sterling honesty, and pleasant manners, he succeeded in winning the respect of the people and in making everyone his friend. People loved him for his common ways, his affability and cleverness to all. He made everyone at home in his presence, whether in or out of the courthouse. He had Lincoln's fondness for a joke, without much of his skill in telling one.

"Judge Bigger had a boy's fondness for shows of all kinds and never failed to attend them. Even Governor Hendricks, who never missed a circus in his life, was never more prompt in attending one of these exhibitions than was Bigger."

During Bigger's terms as circuit court judge, the nation experienced the vicissitudes of the Van Buren administration. Discontent with Jacksonian Democracy was increasing, and the political prospects of the Democrats were further darkened by the Panic of 1837 and its aftermath. The Whigs, therefore, had every reason to expect success in 1840; yet they denied the nomination to the party's most deserving leader, Henry Clay. Many Whigs, and perhaps Bigger was among them, felt that Clay had been cheated. When the Whig national convention nominated William Henry Harrison, however, Bigger gave the "Hero of Tippecanoe" wholehearted allegiance.

JUDGE BIGGER TOOK THE STAND ...

Harrison's record had few political liabilities, and his colorful personality reflected the spirit of the new West and the new South. In contrast, Van Buren was blamed for the economic depression, and his personality lacked magnetism.

Indiana officials were elected earlier in the year than were federal officials. The state constitution of 1816 provided for the election of the governor in August for a three-year term. Results of the August gubernatorial election were thought to indicate the outcome of the November presidential contest. Campaigns were long; state and national issues were interwoven; candidates for the governorship were expected to strengthen the position of the party candidate for the Presidency.

Judge Samuel Bigger was nominated for the governorship by the Whig convention in the spring of 1840. Although little is known of this convention, its motives for choosing Bigger can be conjectured easily. He was an undoubted Whig, experienced in public office; he would wage an aggressive campaign to promote Harrison's cause. After Bigger delivered his acceptance speech, which was highly praised in the Whig newspapers, he immediately began to canvass the southern part of the state. There was some dissatisfaction with Bigger's nomination in this area, particularly in Dearborn County.

The partisan CORYDON WHIG, quoted in the INDIANAPOLIS SEMI-WEEKLY JOURNAL, praised Bigger's campaign speech delivered on April 13, 1840: "Judge Bigger took the stand and spoke at great length. The frequent applause that he received during the delivery of his speech is sufficient evidence of the estimation in which it was held by the hundreds whom he addressed. The power and eloquence with which Judge Bigger spoke to his fellow citizens at once bespeaks him to be a man of the strongest abilities. His personal appearance, his kind and conciliatory manner,

his correct views of the state policy were the admiration of all, without distinction of party."

The close relationship between state and national elections is stressed in an editorial in the July 21, 1840, issue of the INDIANA JOURNAL: "Are General Harrison's friends in Indiana fully sensible how greatly the presidential election is to be affected by the result of the election for governor in August? I trust they are all deeply impressed with the importance of Judge Bigger's election to the success of General Harrison; but as there may be some who do not appreciate the important influence our gubernatorial election will exert on the presidential contest, I beg leave to make for their consideration a few suggestions. The election for governor will be regarded as a test vote. If General Howard is elected, Indiana will be counted among the Van Buren states; to me it appears that every friend of General Harrison should vote for Judge Bigger. If we elect our candidate for governor, the state will unquestionably cast its vote in favor of General Harrison. Our friends throughout the Union will be cheered by our success. Yes, and the eye of the " Old General" is upon us too. Let us unite and elect Judge Bigger governor of Indiana by such an overwhelming majority as shall leave to our opponents no hope of success."

Bigger's Democratic opponent was General Tilghman A. Howard, a skillful debater and a seasoned politician. Howard resigned his seat in Congress to run for governor. On several occasions the two candidates debated before bipartisan audiences. During the campaign Bigger traveled over seven hundred miles on horseback, except for occasional stagecoach and canalboat rides. It is said that he delivered thirty-three speeches; each speech was at least two hours long; many lasted four hours.

BIGGER TRAVELED OVER SEVEN HUNDRED MILES ON HORSEBACK

The following typical timetable shows that Bigger was scheduled to make seven speeches in six counties during the first nine days of May, 1840:

County	Town	Time
Sullivan	Merom	Friday, May 1
Sullivan	Caledonia	Saturday, May 2
Vigo	Terre Haute	Monday, May 4
Clay	Bowling Green	Wednesday, May 6
Putnam	Greencastle	Thursday, May 7
Hendricks	Danville	Friday, May 8
Marion	Indianapolis	Saturday, May 9

Political rallies of that day were events of major social importance. It was not unusual for entire families to travel a full day by wagon to the "speaking," spend one day there, and return home on the third day. Generous portions of barbecued whole beefs were usually served to prospective voters and their families. In Bigger's gubernatorial campaign, much showmanship centered around the log cabin and hard cider; both were symbols of Harrison's closeness to the pioneer. Hard cider flowed freely and so did hard liquor, which has irrigated American elections since Colonial times.

One of the most important Whig rallies was a huge meeting held on the site of the Battle of Tippecanoe. Many soldiers who had served under Harrison planned a reception for him, but the General, who was indisposed, was represented by his son. Bigger was the orator of the day, and at least four other orations were delivered. The Tippecanoe meeting has been described as a "perfect delirium of sentiment" and "a carnival of oratory." Barbecued beef and hard cider were provided in great quantities. The rally undoubtedly advanced the political fortunes of Bigger and Harrison.

A delegation of Whigs from Fort Wayne attended the Tippecanoe meeting to

HARD CIDER FLOWED FREELY...

hear Bigger and the other speakers. The FORT WAYNE SENTINEL had been a Democratic paper from the time of its establishment in 1834 until it was sold in 1837. No Democratic newspaper was published in Fort Wayne until the founder of the SENTINEL, Thomas Tigar, repurchased it at the time prominent Whigs were at Tippecanoe. The SENTINEL immediately published a burlesque account of the Tippecanoe meeting. Great was the consternation of the Whig party in the entire Northwest.

Whig newspapers, however, reported the campaigns of Bigger and Harrison in a most favorable way. They repeatedly refer to the large audiences which Bigger addressed. The rally held at Bowling Green in Clay County on May 6, 1840, was typical. An account of the meeting, written by a visitor from Greencastle, was published in the INDIANAPOLIS SEMI-WEEKLY JOURNAL, May 20, 1840: "Judge Bigger addressed a large and respectable audience at Bowling Green in Clay County. Since no house in the town was suitable to accomodate those who had assembled on this occasion, they marched to the woods within sight of town. In the procession which was formed, nearly a hundred ladies marched. In addition to seeing and hearing Judge Bigger speak, the Whigs of that county met to send delegates to the Tippecanoe convention. A flag, hoisted on a pole about seventy-five feet high on the previous evening, was beautiful. Another flag, attached to a staff, was also opened to the breeze of a very pleasant morning on the sixth; upon it were depicted a log cabin and a barrel of hard cider. We were not put off with the mere picture of a barrel of hard cider on the flag; a couple of barrels were tapped, and their contents received strict attention."

Just across the boundary from Rush County, the KNIGHTSTOWN SUN of July

.. NEARLY A HUNDRED LADIES MARCHED...

the least degree derogating from his high standing as a jurist, a politician, and a gentleman."

Bigger's opponent, General Howard, also spoke to large audiences. The Democratic press generally reported that he was received with tumultuous enthusiasm. "The multitude rent the air with shouts" at the Democratic meeting reported in the WASHINGTON GLOBE of July 7, 1840. The VINCENNES WESTERN SUN of July 6, 1840, dismissed Bigger's speech thus: "He said nothing that was very smart or very exceptional." Neither Howard nor Bigger injected the issue of slavery into the campaign. The census of 1840 reported only three slaves in Indiana. At the national level the subject was avoided as much as possible, for both Whigs and Democrats had supporters in the North and in the South.

The final rally of the gubernatorial campaign was held in Indianapolis. Bigger spoke first and was followed by O. H. Smith, the second Whig orator. General McCarty, a Democrat, then spoke for three hours. The residents of the state capital were prepared to vote by at least seven hours of oratory. The campaign had been a long one, and on the eve of the election the result was doubtful. The choice between Bigger, a jurist and man of peace, and Howard, a congressman and war hero, was unpredictable; both candidates were able and personable men supported by powerful parties.

Bigger was elected. Of the 116,291 votes cast, he received 62,383; Howard, 53,908. Bigger's election, however, did not mean the end of the campaign, but it did indicate the ascendancy of the Whigs. The Van Buren extension of Jacksonian Democracy had lost its virility; the Democrats were identified with the country's economic troubles; the personal popularity of Harrison eclipsed the Jacksonian tra-

dition. Harrison received more votes in Indiana than did Bigger, and the presidential election doubtless affected the gubernatorial race. Bigger, nevertheless, made a good impression and was governor in his own right.

Governor Bigger devoted his inaugural address to legislative matters. In 1840 there was a Whig landslide in the state legislature; fourteen Whig and two Democratic senators, seventy-seven Whig and twenty-three Democratic representatives. Before the end of Bigger's administration a close division of the legislature between Whigs and Democrats prevented harmonious relations in that body; this rivalry aggravated the difficulties of the governor. From the outset, Bigger made it clear that the precarious condition of state finances precluded the completion of the extensive program of internal improvements. He advised that only parts of the program, selected on the basis of merit, be finished.

Financial problems were the chief burden of Bigger's administration. Turnpike, railroad, and canal building had saddled the state with most of its debt of $18,409,146, or $26.92 per capita. This sum became increasingly oppressive as prices continued to decline after the Panic of 1837, and by 1841 interest on the debt could not be paid. Sentiment was growing in the legislature to adopt an age-old panacea: repudiation.

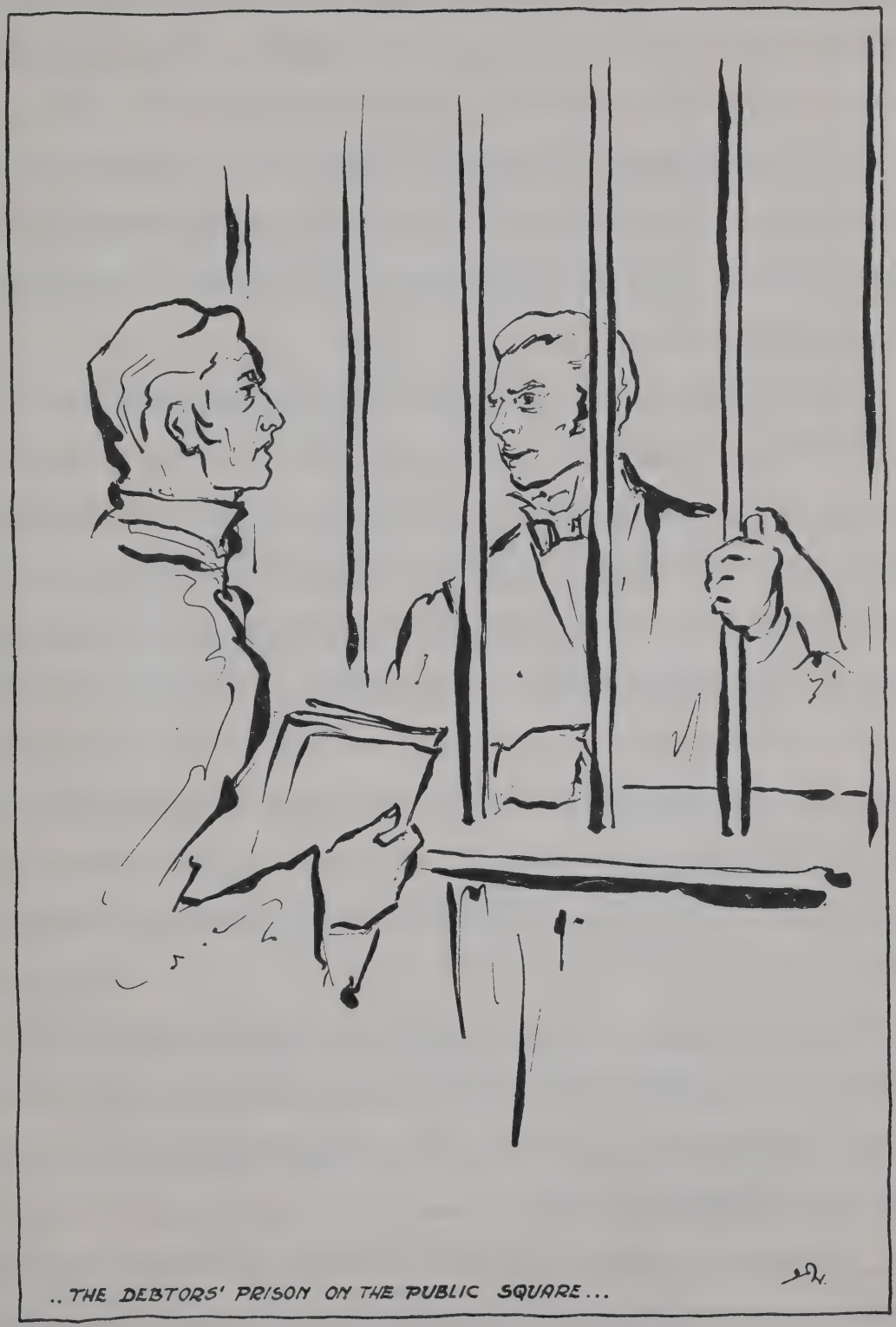
Bigger so vigorously opposed repudiation that he was able to restrain the legislature and preserve the solvency of the state government. His firm insistency that Indiana should pay her honest debt is one of Bigger's chief claims upon the memory of posterity. He could not lead the state out of financial difficulties arising from unwise expenditures, but he did serve as a bulwark against the rising tide of dishonesty.

Bigger's opposition to repudiation was related to his position on the acceptance of state scrip. After Indiana had issued scrip in an effort to meet some of its obligations, it then refused to accept its own scrip for debts due itself. Bigger maintained that state scrip should be accepted at face value for state debts, although its market value had declined to less than 50 per cent. By taking this position, Bigger again protected the integrity of his state.

Under these conditions, Bigger had no opportunity to promote improvements for the material advancement of Indiana. He insisted upon rigorous economy--a policy dictated by necessity and lauded as a virtue. As a member of the legislature Bigger voted against the State Bank; as governor he felt that its closing would aggravate existing financial difficulties, and he, therefore, urged its continuation.

The financial plight of Indiana's government was no worse than that of most Hoosier citizens. Little specie was circulated; trade was at a standstill; prices were at ruinous levels. Economic stress during Governor Bigger's administration was accompanied by turbulence and civil disorder. Violent deeds and criminal acquisitiveness were common. Men, who had ruthlessly exploited the Indian, now turned on each other. Rudimentary law enforcement agencies did not prevent frequent murders, robberies, and swindles.

The distress created by the general depression and by inadequate protection against criminals was made by the incarceration of anyone unable to pay his debts. Imprisonment for debt had been customary in Europe for centuries, and it had long been an accepted practice in America. Robert Morris, "financier of the American Revolution," was confined in a debtors' prison in Philadelphia; President Washington, a close personal friend of Morris, visited him there. Some of the nation's most



.. THE DEBTORS' PRISON ON THE PUBLIC SQUARE...

distinguished political leaders were dogged by process servers. Although it is not known how extensively debtors were imprisoned in Indiana, John W. Dawson mentioned the debtors' prison on the Public Square in Fort Wayne as late as 1837.

Long before Bigger's administration, efforts had been made to abolish imprisonment for debt, and the results of the Panic of 1837 brought increased support to the movement. Arguments, which Bigger must have accepted, were presented to the state senate by Mr. Everts.

"I have always looked upon amalgamation [of innocent and guilty persons], in all its forms, with the utmost abhorrence; and it has never been presented to my mind in a more detestable manner than imprisonment for debt. I think senators should look well to the subject; it is always grating to my ear to hear things so vitally interesting to us all called by the wrong name. Under the present law, the honest debtor (for I am disposed to believe that some debtors are honest) is liable to be thrown into prison and to be made the unwilling companion of the veriest criminal in the land. It has always appeared to me that a man who is guilty of disposing of his property with intent to defraud his creditors is in reality a criminal, and ought to be treated as such. But so long as you make it but a slight disgrace to be put in prison under the false name of being there merely for debt, you, in effect, hold out an inducement for the rascal to conceal his property, take the prison bounds, defy his honest creditors, and stalk abroad at noonday as a legalized swindler, rioting in luxury at the expense of, it may be, the naked and hungry widow and orphan. Certainly these things ought not to be so.

"I can assure the senators that I will go as far as the farthest to procure the passage of any law for the prevention and punishment of crime; and if such offences

are made criminal, with a state prison staring the offenders in the face, and my word for it, men will open their doors, and their pockets also, to their honest creditors.

"If these things are so, why do we continue to disgrace our statute books with this foul stain? It appears to me that we are far behind the times. Why call it 'imprisonment for debt,' when it is actually imprisonment for crime? It is a crime not much short of larceny or robbery, and should be treated with similar punishment. The offenders should be held up to public scorn and disgrace, and they should be marked so they can 'deceive the people no more.' The honest debtor deserves our warmest sympathies and ought never to be made liable to be cast into the same prison with the rascal who is often seen mantling himself in the character of the honest debtor, that he may thus pass unscathed and keep company with just men. This unholy combination I cannot support; it contains 'wild gourds--there is death in the pot.' "

After considerable debate in both houses, the bill was passed by the legislature and signed by Bigger. By this act he ended an old abuse and removed the fear of unjust incarceration from many honest men caught in a depression not of their own making.

During his term as governor, Bigger rendered the state one memorable service not associated with its financial integrity. Indiana laws were in dire need of codification. The confused legal basis of the public school system was typical of the contradictory statutory provisions for most state agencies. Bigger told the legislature that "our schools are a mass of statutory provisions, which present difficulties to the legally disciplined mind and which are almost insuperable to the ordinary cit-

izens." In February, 1841, the legislature requested Bigger "to prepare a compilation and revision of the general statute laws." He was to suggest amendments, alterations, and additions "with a view to the adoption and enactment by the legislature of a full and complete code of general laws."

Bigger was well qualified to undertake this important work. His education, practice as a lawyer, service in the legislature, and experience as a judge all combined to fit him to draft the new code. He worked diligently at the task throughout most of 1841, and toward the end of that year the legislature allowed him an assistant, George H. Dunn. The codified and revised laws were submitted to the legislature late in 1842 and were enacted with very little change. In BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF THE BENCH AND BAR OF INDIANA, Charles W. Taylor states that "no governor of this state has ever had as much to do with the framing of its laws as Governor Bigger."

In 1843 the Whigs nominated Bigger for a second term. The national political picture had changed since 1840: Harrison had been dead for two years; no national election was to be held for another year; the popularity of the Whig party had decreased during John Tyler's administration. Conditions were also unfavorable at the state level: Bigger had not solved the state's financial problems; his opponents charged that he had misused his right to pardon criminals; a major religious denomination had become offended. In fact, it is thought by some historians that Bigger was defeated "mainly by the influence of the Methodist church." During the campaign it was alleged that not only had Bigger opposed legislation establishing Asbury University (now DePauw), but that in doing so he had said that "the Methodist church did not need an educated clergy for an ignorant one was better suited to the

capacity of its membership." Bishop Ames is quoted as saying in 1846 that "it was the amen corner of the Methodist church that defeated Governor Bigger, and I had a hand in the work."

In spite of the national decline of the Whig party and local animosity, Bigger was very nearly re-elected. James Whitcomb, the Democratic candidate, received 60,714 votes; and Bigger received 58,701. Inasmuch as the Abolitionist candidate received 1,684 votes, Whitcomb was elected by a majority of only 329. The Democratic strongholds returned an increased vote in 1843 over that of 1840, and in the newer counties the Democrats proved stronger than the Whigs. Moreover, the vote was light in the Whig counties; had the balloting been normal in Wayne, Vigo, Rush, Laporte, Henry, and Harrison counties, Bigger would have been re-elected.

When his term ended, Bigger decided to move to Fort Wayne. He lived in a two-story frame house on East Main Street; the site was later used for the confectionery house of George Fox. Bigger's second home in Fort Wayne was a small frame house on the lot later occupied by the parsonage of the English Lutheran Church.

From a description of Bigger at the time he lived in Fort Wayne, he seems much as he had been in Rushville. He was said to be six feet two inches tall and to weigh two hundred forty pounds. "His hair was black, his eyes a blue hazel, and his complexion dark." He was "a good bass singer, and a skillful performer upon the violin." For a time Bigger directed the choir of the First Presbyterian Church, which he also served as an elder.

After Bigger came to Fort Wayne, he gave every indication of desiring to remain in private life. In 1844 he declined the honor of becoming a Whig presidential

elector. Late in 1845 Bigger repressed a movement to nominate him for governor. The FORT WAYNE TIMES of December 1, 1845, printed in full his refusal to be considered:

"It has been frequently stated in the public papers of this state that my name probably might be used before the Whig convention to be held during the present winter at Indianapolis, as a candidate for the office of governor. I deem it proper to make my determination on this subject known to the public through the medium of your paper.

"Shortly after the result of the election in 1843, I selected Fort Wayne as my place of residence; and, ever since, it has been my settled resolution never again to become a candidate for the office of governor. I might give various reasons for this determination, but it is unnecessary for me to do so. The acceptance of the office involves no inconsiderable pecuniary sacrifice; and it will be perfectly satisfactory to those who wish me well, to say that I cannot afford to make this sacrifice.

"There are in the state many men--Whigs good and true--to whom the office is desirable; and, among these, I doubt not that a suitable candidate will be found. To support from the ranks true Whig principles is now the extent of my political ambition; I shall not be found wanting in sustaining the candidate who shall be selected to expound and to defend those principles."

Bigger's motives for declining political honors are unknown. The outlook for the Whig party was not bright, and, in all probability, Bigger was honest in saying that the "acceptance of the office involves no inconsiderable pecuniary sacrifice." He must have enjoyed a large law practice, for it is unlikely that any other man in the state knew as much of the new Indiana code. He is said to have been "as

faithful as a dog to his clients." Bigger's law partner in Fort Wayne was Joseph K. Edgerton, who became a distinguished railroad official.

Bigger repeatedly expressed his interest in public education while he was governor, and had the state's finances not been in such a deplorable condition, he would doubtless have strengthened the school system. After he came to Fort Wayne, Bigger presided at an "enthusiastic and decisive meeting of citizens" who "determined to establish the Fort Wayne Female College without delay." William Rockhill donated the land for the school at the end of West Wayne Street.

An incident which surely distressed Bigger at the time was reported in the FORT WAYNE TIMES AND PEOPLE'S PRESS of August 9, 1845. "On last Thursday morning about four o'clock, the town was aroused from its slumbers by a fire. On proceeding to the spot, it was found to be Governor Bigger's smokehouse, which, with the bacon it contained, was consumed without further damage! During the alarm Mohring's Clothing Store was robbed. It is probable that the smokehouse was set on fire to make an opportunity to commit this robbery, as we are informed that the fire could have been started only by design."

The career of Bigger came to an abrupt close. The FORT WAYNE SENTINEL of September 12, 1846, reported his unexpected death: "We regret to announce the death of our esteemed fellow citizen, Samuel Bigger, ex-governor of this state. He died in this city on Wednesday (September 9), after a very short illness. He became sick last week while attending court in Wells County and arrived at his home on Friday; but it was not until Tuesday evening that his illness was considered at all dangerous; yet so rapidly did he sink under his complaint, that before midnight his life was despaired of, and on Wednesday forenoon he breathed his last. We believe

his complaint was a bilious fever.

"Governor Bigger had resided here two years, and by his upright conduct, suavity of manners, and affability, had secured the respect and esteem of all his fellow citizens. He was in the forty-fifth year of his age."

Bigger received more than the usual obituary notice. On September 26, the SENTINEL announced that "a discourse on the death of the late Governor Bigger will be delivered in the First Presbyterian Church" at eleven o'clock on Sunday.

The FORT WAYNE TIMES AND PEOPLE'S PRESS of September 15, referred to Bigger in terms of eulogy: "His stay among us was brief but long enough to form friendships and social ties, the sudden rending of which has caused many a heart to bleed. Indeed, all men seem to have been his friends--enemies, we believe, he had none. Governor Bigger possessed talent of high order, rather substantial and useful than brilliant. His judgment, remarkably sound, dispassionate, and discriminating, invariably made him a leader in every circle in which he moved--whether in political life, at the bar, or in society at large. For the last eight years he has been a member and part of the time a ruling elder in the Presbyterian church. At the time of his death he was the superintendent of the Sunday school. The affectionate interest of the children, who gathered around his corpse to catch a last look at their teacher, their guide, and their friend, afforded evidence of the high estimate placed upon his benevolent efforts for the promotion of their highest interests."

The resolution on Bigger's death of the Allen County Bar Association was printed on October 17, by the FORT WAYNE TIMES AND PEOPLE'S PRESS:

"The Allen Circuit Court opened on Monday, the twelfth of October, 1846; present were Judges Borden, Starkweather, and McMaken.

"On the opening of the Court, Henry Cooper, Esq., the senior counsel at the bar of said Court, announced the death of Samuel Bigger as follows:

'God in his wisdom has been pleased to end a life of usefulness by the death of our brother and friend, ex-governor Samuel Bigger, which took place in this city on the ninth of September. A few days ago he stood with us on the broad platform of human life, in the health and vigor of manhood; his prospects for a long journey in life were as fair as any who are now permitted to assemble at this bar.

'But alas! warm in the affections of this people, and full of the honors of his profession, that journey has terminated in the dark labyrinth of the grave. In conformity with an established and honorable custom of the bar, on the decease of one of its members, we are called here under these melancholy circumstances to pay our kind and affectionate tribute to his memory. Our associations with him have been both pleasurable and highly instructive, and the relationship, which we have sustained with him both in his public and private life, has given us abundant cause to revere his name and to love the lingering memory of associations with him.

'This bar has lost a learned associate, society an amiable member, his family a kind husband and affectionate father, and the church an exemplary and pious man. In this bereavement we have the consolatory reflection that he died with a Christian's hope and the good man's resignation, and that he has left to posterity a good example and to his children an honorable name.

'That the private and public virtues of the deceased would be duly appreciated by all who knew him, and especially by the members of his profession, and that in this dispensation of Providence we are reminded that life is passing swiftly away, "that it continueth but for a little season," ' Mr. Cooper hoped that appropriate

resolutions would be adopted to Bigger's memory.

"Whereupon the Court adjourned, and at a meeting of the members of the bar, Henry Cooper, Esq., was elected chairman and John W. Dawson was chosen secretary.

"On the motion of Robert Brackenridge, Esq., a committee of three consisting of D. H. Colerick, John W. Dawson, and George Johnson, Esq., were appointed to draft by tomorrow morning resolutions expressive of the feelings of the bar, and the meeting adjourned; when the members of the bar reconvened, the resolutions presented by Henry Cooper were unanimously adopted:

'WHEREAS, An all wise Providence hath called from among us our amiable and dignified brother, Samuel Bigger, Esq. He departed from this life on Wednesday, the ninth day of September, in his own domicile in the midst of his family and his friends. Through his sickness he evinced a patience and resignation which evidenced the enlightened and satisfactory hopes he entertained of a happy immortality.

'He died in the meridian of his strength and usefulness with soundness of mind and integrity of character. Many high public trusts were confided to him, and in whatever sphere of action, he made himself equal to the station. He was a sound lawyer, an upright judge, a wise legislator, and a prudent and enlightened governor.

'He was inclined to be tolerant and patient, disposed to admire virtue and to promote merits, and destined to be an accessible, familiar, communicative, and sincere friend, and a devoted husband and father. In a word, according to the opinions of mankind, he was "the noblest work of God"--an honest and an upright man. I, therefore, in testimony of our high regard for our deceased brother and the memory we cherish for his many virtues, propose that it be

'RESOLVED, That the Court, its officers, and members of the bar will wear crape on the left arm for thirty days.

'RESOLVED, That the proceedings of this meeting be entered in the order book of this Court, be published in the city papers, and be presented to his bereaved family by the secretary.

'RESOLVED, That this Court be requested to adjourn until tomorrow morning as a further testimony of regard for the memory of the deceased.' "

The legislature met in December, 1846, and passed the following resolutions on Bigger's death:

"RESOLVED, Unanimously that the senate entertains the most profound regret for this melancholy event and will cherish the memory of his useful and patriotic career as a public servant, and of his amiable and generous public life.

"RESOLVED, Unanimously that the senate tenders the warmest sympathy to the family of the deceased in the deeply afflicting loss they have sustained.

"RESOLVED, Unanimously that the secretary notify the house of representatives of the adoption of these resolutions and that the president of the senate be requested to cause an attested copy thereof to be transmitted to the family of the deceased."

Bigger was buried under a slab of Dayton stone in the northeast corner of the old Broadway Cemetery. The following inscription appeared on the stone at the head of his grave:

SAMUEL BIGGER

LATE GOVERNOR

OF THIS STATE

DIED

Sept. 9, 1846,

IN THE 45TH YEAR OF HIS AGE.

****

A PATRIOT AND CHRISTIAN

HE DIED IN THE FULL HOPE

OF A GLORIOUS IMMORTALITY.

****

I would not live always, so, welcome the tomb,

Since Jesus hath lain there I dread not its gloom.

****

By 1885 many bodies had been removed from the Broadway Cemetery, and an effort was made to turn the area into a park. It was feared by some citizens, however, that if the bodies of cholera victims were exhumed, an epidemic would break out in the city. Two years later, Representative William Shambaugh introduced a bill in the legislature providing for a monument to Bigger; the bill was not enacted.

As more and more remains were moved from the Broadway Cemetery, Joseph K. Edgerton, Bigger's Fort Wayne law partner, offered a lot in Lindenwood Cemetery "if the city would move the body and build a suitable monument." Nothing was done. In February, 1908, J. M. Henry persuaded the Fort Wayne City Council to

GOVERNOR·BIGGER'S·GRAVE·IN·McCULLOCH·PARK—

resolve that it was "the desire of the Council that a suitable monument be erected on the grave of Governor Bigger, that his name be perpetuated for future ages." Clement W. Edgerton, son of Bigger's law partner, offered to contribute $2,500 to a fund of $5,000 for a monument if the city would appropriate the other $2,500. The Fort Wayne City Council did not accept this offer.

While a new road and other improvements were being built by the General Electric Company in 1923, a workman found the stone over the neglected grave and reported it to E. A. Barnes, superintendent of the General Electric plant. Mr. Barnes had an iron railing built around the grave and informed the Allen County-Fort Wayne Historical Society. Mrs. Samuel R. Taylor, Mrs. Anna Dunkelberg, and Mrs. J. B. Crankshaw were appointed a committee for the Bigger marker. On September 30, 1923, a ceremony was held and a bronze plaque was placed on a concrete slab over the grave. No other effort has been made to mark the final resting place of Governor Bigger.

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